

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9983
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 0791

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PFOR, IS, US, XF
SUBJECT: RABIN VISIT: VIEWS OF ISRAEL'S WASHINGTON PRESS CORPS

SUMMARY: RABIN VISIT HAS RECEIVED EXTENSIVE COVERAGE
IN ISRAELI PRESS REVEALING CONSIDERABLE CONCERN AND
UNCERTAINTY AS TO STATE OF US/ISRAELI RELATIONS AND
IMPLICATIONS OF VISIT FOR FUTURE NEGOTIATING STEPS.
THE CONSENSUS IS THAT RABIN HAS DISCHARGED HIMSELF
WELL SO FAR, THOUGH VIEWS DIFFER AS TO THE EXTENT OF
RESIDUAL DISAGREEMENT AND THE GRAVITY OF POSSIBLE MIS-
UNDERSTANDINGS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE US. FOCUS IS
ON US/ISRAELI VIEWS OF PALESTINIAN ISSUE AND PROSPECTS
FOR RECONVENED GENEVA CONFERENCE AS WELL AS US RESPONSE
TO ISRAELI AID REQUEST. END SUMMARY.

1. ALL WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENTS REPORT AN
ASSESSMENT OF RABIN'S WASHINGTON TALKS BY "SENIOR
ISRAELI SOURCES". DAVAR'S NAHUM BARNEA CITES THE
SOURCES AS BELIEVING, DESPITE ISRAEL'S PUBLIC
POSITION ADVOCATING THE RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA
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CONFERENCE IN ITS ORIGINAL FORMAT, THAT
THE CONFERENCE WILL PROBABLY BE BLOCKED BY SYRIAN-

SOVIET-PLO MOVES. AFTER RABIN'S THIRD AND LAST MEETING WITH PRESIDENT FORD YESTERDAY, THE SOURCES SAID, AMERICAN EXPLORATIONS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF MIDDLE EAST NEGOTIATIONS WOULD START, BUT THERE WAS NO NEED FOR DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS IN ISRAEL. FORD AND RABIN AGREED THAT THE PLO MUST BE BLOCKED AND NEUTRALIZED, AND IN GENERAL WERE NOT ALL THAT FAR APART IN THEIR POLITICAL VIEWS. BARNEA LEARNED THAT RABIN REFRAINED FROM ASKING THAT THE AID REQUEST FOR 1977 BE UPPED BY \$500 MILLION; HE DID NOT WANT TO ASK THE PRESIDENT TO CHANGE THE BUDGET HE HAD JUST PRESENTED TO CONGRESS, AND HAD MISGIVINGS ABOUT GIVING PROMINENCE TO AID FOR 1977 WHILE THE 1976 ALLOCATION WAS NOT APPROVED YET. HOWEVER, THE PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD CONSIDER AN ADDITIONAL SPECIAL REQUEST LATER. RABIN IS SAID TO HAVE RECEIVED AN AFFIRMATIVE REPLY ON SOME MAIN ITEMS OF THE ISRAELI PROCUREMENT LIST FOR THE COMING YEARS AND WAS SATISFIED; THE ISRAELIS HAD DECIDED NOT TO PRESS IN THE MATTER OF FINANCING, ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE AMERICANS THEMSELVES WOULD FIND WAYS AND MEANS. FROM THE TALKS WITH PRESIDENT FORD, THE SOURCE GATHERED THAT THE QUESTION OF HIS MIDDLE EAST VISIT WAS STILL OPEN; ISRAEL HAD NOT BEEN ASKED WHETHER THE VISIT WAS ESSENTIAL, AND HAD VOLUNTEERED NO OPINION. DR. KISSINGER'S TALK ABOUT A PREPARATORY CONFERENCE, THE SOURCE SAID, WAS A "GIMMICK". THE SUBJECT HAD NOT BEEN MENTIONED NOR HAD THERE BEEN ANY REFERENCE TO BLAMING RABIN FOR PAST CRISES IN ISRAEL-US RELATIONS, INCLUDING THE FAILURE OF LAST MARCH'S INTERIM SETTLEMENT TALKS.

3. WOLF BLITZER IN THE JERUSALEM POST IS MUCH MORE SPECIFIC ON THE PLO ASPECT, ON WHICH HE WRITES:

"...THE SOURCES SAID THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO DIFFERENCE OF OPINION BETWEEN THE US AND ISRAEL REGARDING RECOGNITION OF THE PLO...THE US UNDERSTANDS THAT EVERY VICTORY FOR THE PLO IS A DEFEAT FOR WASHINGTON THE SOURCES INSISTED THAT THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE IS NOT UNCLASSIFIED UNCLASSIFIED

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A MAJOR PROBLEM BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND JERUSALEM, AND THAT THE US AND ISRAEL ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO OPPOSE THE PLO. NEVERTHELESS IT REMAINS CLEAR HERE IN WASHINGTON THAT THE TWO SIDES HAVE NOT REACHED COMPLETE AGREEMENT ON OTHER POLITICAL ISSUES."

4. DAN MARGALITH IN HAARETZ ADDS THAT THE SOURCES SAID THE PACE AT WHICH WEAPONS WERE SUPPLIED TO ISRAEL DEPENDED LARGELY ON CONGRESSIONAL PRESSURE FOR RESTOCKING US ARSENALS FIRST. ISRAEL, THEY INSISTED,

WAS NOT INTERESTED IN COMBINING THE DEBATES ON AID FOR 1976 AND 1977, SINCE THAT WOULD INVOLVE A TOTAL OF \$4-5 BILLION. US-ISRAELI DISCUSSIONS ON POLITICAL MATTERS, THE SOURCES SAID, WOULD CONTINUE DURING THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, BUT NO EARLY POLITICAL DECISIONS WERE EXPECTED. JERUSALEM HAD NOT BEEN ASKED TO TAKE CONCRETE DECISIONS; THE TALKS HAD TURNED ON ACHIEVING A COMMON LINE OF THINKING ABOUT THE GENERAL POLITICAL DIRECTION. ISRAEL AND THE US WERE NOT ALL THAT FAR APART, EITHER AS TO CONTENT OR AS TO MODALITIES, THOUGH IT WOULD BE WRONG TO SAY THAT THE US HAD ACCEPTED ISRAEL'S POSITION, OR VICE VERSA. RECONVENING GENEVA HAD BEEN DISCUSSED IN AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT CONTEXT, BUT A RETURN TO THE SYSTEM OF NEGOTIATING SETTLEMENTS BY STAGES AS IN THE PAST, WAS NOT TO BE RULED OUT. OTHER WASHINGTON SOURCES SAID THE MAIN POINT NOT YET SETTLED CONCERNED THE START OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR AN OVERALL SETTLEMENT WITH JORDAN AND THE POSSIBILITY OF PERSUADING AMMAN TO NEGOTIATE IN SPITE OF THE RABAT RESOLUTIONS. AMERICANS WANTED ISRAEL TO SOFTEN ITS POSITION ON THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE AND TO ANNOUNCE THAT IT WOULD AGREE TO NEGOTIATE AT GENEVA WITH WHOEVER WOULD ACCEPT RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338.

5. IN SEPARATE ARTICLE, BANEA REPORTS THAT "A SENIOR SOURCE IN RABIN'S PARTY" SEVERELY CRITICIZED IDF PROCUREMENT POLICY FOR MAKING EXAGGERATED DEMANDS: THE LISTS PRESENTED "DID NOT HELP ISRAEL'S RESPECTABILITY AT ALL..FORTUNATELY, WE HAVE PUT ALL THAT STRAIGHT. THE ARGUMENTS WERE ABOUT ACCESSORIES, NOT MAIN WEAPONS, AND ACCESSORIES DO NOT DETERMINE ISRAEL'S MILITARY POWER. IN THE COURSE OF THE UNCLASSIFIED UNCLASSIFIED

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LAST YEAR THERE HAVE BEEN ENORMOUS CHANGES IN THE LISTS. MY EXPERIENCE IS THAT ANYONE IN THE DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT WHO THINKS THAT HE KNOWS WHAT HE WILL WANT NEXT YEAR IS WRONG..." THE SOURCE WAS ALSO AGGRESSIVE IN HIS CRITICISM OF THE REPORTING OF ISRAELI CORRESPONDENTS IN WASHINGTON, WHOM HE CALLED "AN UNCOMMON INSTRUMENT FOR SOWING CONFUSION IN ISRAEL," "AN ANTI-ISRAELI TOOL," "A TOLL OF ELEMENTS IN THE ADMINISTRATION WHO HAVE NO SAY IN ANYTHING AND WHO WANT TO MAKE THE ISRAELIS DESPONDENT." AN ISRAELI DIPLOMAT TRIED TO MEND MATTERS BY REMARKING THAT THE CORRESPONDENTS DID SO UNINTENTIONALLY, BUT THE SENIOR SOURCE DID NOT ENDORSE THE

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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CORRECTION. "THE PRESS," HE SAID, "HAS BECOME A TOLL OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT IN ORDER TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF A SEVERE CRISIS IN RELATIONS AND TO PRODUCE A SOMBER MOOD IN ISRAEL, ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THAT WILL BRING ABOUT ISRAELI CONCESSIONS."

6. SEGEV (MAARIV) NOTES THAT BEYOND THE TACTICAL MOVE OF STRESSING THE NEED FOR RECONVENING THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, THERE IS NO AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND THE U.S. ON FURTHER STEPS. IF AND WHEN A NEW DEADLOCK OCCURS, THERE WILL BE FURTHER CONSULTATIONS. HE CITES ISRAELI SOURCES AS PREDICTING THAT, SINCE NO PROMISE OF ADDITIONAL AID FOR 1977 WAS OBTAINED -- OR, POSSIBLY, ASKED FOR -- DISCUSSIONS ON THIS POINT WILL CONTINUE WHEN SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY SIMON IS IN THE MIDDLE EAST NEXT MONTH. AMERICAN OFFICIALS, SEGEV WRITES, TEND TO ACCEPT RABIN'S ASSESSMENT THAT ISRAEL, WHILE IT DOES NOT WANT WAR, IS CAPABLE OF WINNING IT IF IT SHOULD RESULT FROM A DEADLOCK PRODUCED BY SYRIAN-SOVIET-PLO INTERFERENCE WITH THE RECONVENING OF THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AND TENSION ON THE EXPIRY OF THE UNDOF MANDATE; BUT FEAR A

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WAR WOULD DO ISRAEL NO GOOD WITH U.S. PUBLIC OPINION. A RELIABLE AMERICAN SOURCE IS CITED AS SAYING THAT U.S.-ISRAELI DIFFERENCES ON THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE WERE REFLECTED IN THE TALKS, THOUGH BOTH SIDES FAVOR A SOLUTION IN THE JORDANIAN CONTEXT. ISRAEL'S OBJECTIONS TO THE PLO ARE CLEAR-CUT: IT WOULD NOT BE ENOUGH FOR THE PLO TO ENDORSE RESOLUTIONS 242 AND 338 UNLESS THE PLO ALSO REVOKES ITS PALESTINAIN CHARTER. THE U.S. WOULD APPARENTLY CONTENT ITSELF FOR THE PRESENT WITH A FORMAL, PUBLIC PLO STATEMENT RECOGNIZING ISRAEL'S EXISTENCE AND ACCEPTING THE RESOLUTIONS. RABIN, THE SOURCE SAYS, IS LEAVING WITH THE AWARENESS THAT OPPOSITION TO FOREIGN AID IS STEADILY INCREASING IN THE U.S., WHICH MAY BE WHY HE HAD TWO MEETING WITH THE HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEES.

7. MAARIV CORRESPONDENT BEN IS NOT CERTAIN THAT THE AMERICAN MEDIA BELIEVED RABIN WHEN HE INSISTED AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THERE WERE NO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN HIMSELF AND PRESIDENT FORD. THEY REGARDED THE REPORT THAT THERE WAS TO BE A THIRD FORD-RABIN MEETING AS EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY, AN INTERPRETATION WHICH ISRAELI SOURCES ASCRIBED

TO A CAMPAIGN BY CERTAIN STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS. THE DIFFERENCES REQUIRING THE THIRD MEETING HAD BEEN ASCRIBED TO U.S. INSISTENCE THAT ISRAEL START NEGOTIATING WITH THE PLO SOMEHOW, SINCE THAT WOULD HELP PLO MODERATES GAIN THE UPPER HAND. RABIN, DURING HIS WASHINGTON STAY, CONTINUED TO REJECT ALL IDEAS OF A DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO. ONE OF HIS ARGUMENTS WAS THAT EVENTS IN LEBANON HAD CONVINCED ISRAEL THAT ARAB-MOSLEM EXTREMISM WAS INCAPABLE OF TOLERATING A NON-MOSLEM MINORITY.

8. FROM A REPORT BY KIWITY IN YEDIOT: "THE MAIN ASSIGNMENT OF THE VISIT IS OVER ALREADY FOR YITZHAK RABIN, AND THOUGH MOST PARTICULARS OF HIS TALKS WITH ADMINISTRATION HEADS ARE STILL WRAPPED IN SECRECY -- AS THOUGH IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE NEW COMMANDMENT: THOU SHALT NOT LEAK -- ONE CAN SAY WITH CERTAINTY THAT HE HAS DISCHARGED HIS HEAVY TASK RESPECTABLY AND SUCCESSFULLY". NOT SO MANY MONTHS AGO, AT THE HEIGHT OF THE REASSESSMENT CRISIS, MANY OF US FEARED THAT 'THINGS WITH AMERICA WOULD NOT BE AGAIN AS THEY HAD BEEN.' THAT FORE-UNCLASSIFIED

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CAST WAS DISPROVED BY THIS VISIT. THERE ARE SURE TO BE TENSIONS AND CRISES YET, PERHAPS EVEN MORE SERIOUS ONES THAN SO FAR, BUT THE FOUNDATION OF THE 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP,' WHICH KISSINGER AND FORD MAKE A POINT OF MENTIONING AGAIN AND AGAIN, IS ASTONISHINGLY STRONG."

9. JACOBSON (YEDIOT) WRITES THAT, IRONICALLY, "JEWISH LEADERS

NOT INVITED TO OFFICIAL RECEPTIONS AT THE
WHITE HOUSE SAY THAT THE PICTURE THEY GET OF THIS RABIN
VISIT IS DEPRESSING. THEY READ OF REGULARLY REPEATED AMERICAN
PRESSURE ON ISRAEL; THEY HEAR PEOPLE SAYING THAT ISRAEL HAS
AMPLE ARMS AND THAT AT LEAST ONE-THIRD OF THE ARMS AID
PROMISED IT SHOULD BE CUT, OR AT ANY RATE USED IN ORDER TO
SQUEEZE MORE CONCESSIONS OUT OF ISRAEL. THEY REMEMBER VERY
WELL HOW AMERICAN TELEVISION NETWORKS COVERED SADAT'S TOUR
LAST NOVEMBER AND HOW EVERY REPORT STARTED WITH A REFERENCE
TO THE 'HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE' OF THE VISIT, AND THEY
COMPARE IT WITH THE COVERAGE OF THE RABIN VISIT IN
THE AMERICAN MEDIA, WHICH STRESSES THAT IT PARALLELS
SADAT'S VISIT POINT FOR POINT."
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